AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An offline-online points system comprising:

~~a main server~~ logic ~~configured for providing~~ operable to provide a user with an interface to submit a code obtainable by the user from an item;

~~a code server~~ logic ~~configured for maintaining~~ operable to maintain a set of valid codes and to determine ~~for comparing~~ whether the code submitted by the user is a valid code ~~against the set of valid codes such that~~ and if ~~based on the comparison the code is deemed~~ valid then to credit the user ~~is credited with a given number of~~ points, ~~wherein~~ the points being ~~are~~ accummuable into a point balance with other points credited for point actionable activities including one or more of viewing an advertisement, and registering with a website, the points ~~earned by or credited to the user are accumulated, the accumulated points being~~ redeemable for value, including for an ~~auctioned~~ item which the user won ~~submitted~~ in an auction ~~a wining bid~~;

~~an agent configured to participate as a proxy for the user in the auction while participating as a proxy for the user in any number of other auctions; and~~

~~a database server~~ logic operable to track the point balance in an account ~~with~~ of an account database having a plurality of ~~an~~ accounts ~~to hold the accumulated points for the user, wherein accounts are set up~~ configurable for transferring ~~accumulated~~ points therebetween[[,]]; and

logic operable to associate respective credit lines with ~~wherein~~ accounts determined to be for users that are heavily active, ~~are each associated with a credit line and a credit-enabled marker such that if the user is deemed heavily active~~ the respective credit lines[[line]] ~~associated with the user's account is set up with points~~ for supplementing the point balance of the respective account with credit points for auction participation ~~accumulated points when the agent participates for the user in an auction~~.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The offline-online points system of claim 1, further comprising:

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a user database associated with the account for tracking the accumulated points for the user.

Claim 3 (Currently amended): The offline-online points system of claim 1[[2]], wherein the account balance ~~of the account~~ is M points prior to the user's submission of the code, ~~wherein the given number is N,~~ and wherein the code <u>logic</u>~~server~~ is configured for updating the account balance to M+N points after the user submits the code and if the code is valid.

Claim 4 (Currently amended): The offline-online points system of claim 1[[2]], wherein the point actionable activities include ~~user earns points through~~ auctioning items, the points being ~~earned~~<u>credited</u> in lieu of cash payment for the auctioned items.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The offline-online points system of claim 1 wherein the code is C letters in length from an Alphabet of L letters.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The offline-online points system of claim 5, wherein C is 10.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The offline-online points system of claim 5, wherein L is 29.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The offline-online points system of claim 5, wherein L is 36.

Claims 9-23 (cancelled)

Claim 24 (previously presented): The offline-online points system of claim 1, wherein the points are maintained in the account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The offline-online points system of claim 1, further comprising a computer program for generating the code, the code being fixed onto a medium such that the code is obtainable from the medium offline.

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Claim 26 (cancelled)

Claims 27-37 (cancelled)

Claim 38 (Currently amended): A system for incentive points earning and redemption, comprising:

[[an]]web auction logic, web server with an auction database, for auctioning items in an auction;

[[a]]web store logic, web server with a store database, for maintaining information on items offered by a business;

[[a]]web server logic[[from]] by which a user may interact with the auction web server and the store web server are accessible to a user for interacting therewith, including[[for]] participating in the auction of an item offered by the business, the web server, in turn, being accessible to the user from either or both of the auction web server and the store web server;

an agent configured to participate as a proxy for the user in the auction while participating as a proxy for the user in any number of other auctions; and

database logic operable to track a point balance of the user in an account of an account database having a plurality of accounts, to transfer points among the plurality of accounts, and to characterize each point of the point balance as one of purchase and attention incentive points, the points a user database configured for maintaining a user account, tracking respective point balances with points earned by the user, wherein each earned point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable for value including for an auctioned item [[for]]which the user won at auctionsubmitted a winning bid price of the item being auctioned, wherein accounts are set up in the user database such that earned points are transferable therebetween, wherein accounts of heavily active users are associated with a credit line, the credit line for use in supplementing the point balance if an agent is bidding for the user on an item at auction and the point balance is insufficient to cover the bid that the agent would otherwise place.accounts set up in the user database for users that are heavily active are each associated with a credit line and a credit enabled marker such that if the user is deemed heavily active the credit line associated with the account for the user is set up

~~with points for supplementing the earned points when the agent participates for the user in an auction.~~

Claim 39 (cancelled)

Claim 40 (Currently amended): A system as in claim 38, wherein the user's interaction ~~involves~~comprises at least one of registration, an indicia of attention to an ad, and[[or]] a purchase, in relation to which the [[user]] database logic is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

Claim 41 (Currently amended): A system as in claim 38, wherein the user's interaction involves entering a winning bid for the item being auctioned in relation to which the[[user]] database logic is configured to dispatch a predetermined number of points taken out of that user's account.

Claim 42 (Currently amended): A system as in claim 38, wherein the points are maintained in the user account in an encrypted form to ~~prevent~~reduce unauthorized interference with the user account.

Claim 43-45 (cancelled)

Claim 46 (Currently amended): A system as in claim 38[[43]], wherein attention incentive points are awarded in response at least one of registration, and an indicia of attention to an ad, ~~or a purchase, in relation to which the account database is configured to receive into the user's account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.~~

Claims 47-49 (cancelled)

Claim 50 (Currently amended): A method for offline-online management of points, comprising:
~~obtaining a code offline from an item;~~
~~submitting the code online to a server that maintains a set of valid codes;~~
~~at the server,~~

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<u>receiving a code obtained from an item and submitted by a user;</u>

comparing the code against <u>a</u>[[the]] set of valid codes and, if the code is found to be valid, crediting <u>the</u>[[a]] user that submitted the code with a given number of points<u>;</u>[[.]]

<u>accumulating the credited points in an account with other points credited for point actionable activities including one or more of viewing an advertisement, and registering with a website, the points redeemable for value, including for an item which the user won in an auction;</u>

~~accumulating the points earned by or credited to the user in an account, the points being redeemable for value including an auctioned item for which the user submitted a wining bid in an auction;~~

~~instantiating an agent to participate as a proxy for the user in the auction substantially concurrently with any number of other auctions;~~ and

<u>determining whether the user is heavily active and if so then associating a credit line with the account, the credit line for supplementing the accumulated points in the account for auction participation.</u>

~~reserving points from a credit line associated with the account if the account is associate with a credit-enabled marker, the reserved points supplementing the points in the account when the agent participates for the user in an auction, wherein accounts are set up for transferring points between them.~~

Claim 51 (previously presented): A method as in claim 50, wherein the accumulated points are maintained in encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

Claim 52 (previously presented): A method as in claim 50, wherein the points in the user account are redeemable for a gift or a discount.

Claim 53 (Currently amended): A method as in claim <u>50</u>[[52]], wherein the auction is one of a standard auction, a Dutch auction, a progressive auction, a buy-or-bid auction, and a declining bid auction.

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Claim 54 (Currently amended): A method as in claim 50[[52]], wherein the auction involves one or more of an automated closing, automated bidding, automated selling, and auction alert.

Claim 55 (Currently amended): A method as in claim 50[[51]], wherein points are added to the account for the user by authorizing credit points.

Claims 56-57 (Cancelled)

Claim 58 (previously presented): A method as in claim 50 further comprising:
generating the code; and
fixing the code onto a medium such that the code is obtainable from the medium offline.

Claim 59 (previously presented): A method as in claim 58, wherein the code is fixed onto the medium by printing the code on a bottle cap from which the code is readable to the user.

Claims 60-74 (cancelled)

Claim 75 (new): The offline-online points system of claim 4, wherein the auctioning of the items occurs in an auction having an initially fixed end time, and if bidding in the auction is slower than a threshold, ending the auction sooner than the initially fixed end time.

Claim 76 (new): An online merchant affinity points method comprising:
providing points to an online merchant, the points provided in exchange for at least one of cash, advertising revenue, and web traffic; and
establishing an online venue for redeeming for value, from a user, at least a portion of the points provided to the merchant, the points obtained by the user from the merchant by engaging in point actionable activities including at least one of registering at a web site, viewing an ad, and clicking on an ad.

Claim 77 (new): The online merchant affinity points method of claim 76, further comprising:

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establishing an account for the user, the account for maintaining a point balance of the points obtained by the user;

categorizing the points obtained by the user into a plurality of categories;

establishing point expiration rules for each of the plurality of categories; and

reducing the point balance based on expiration of points in one or more of the plurality of categories.

Claim 78 (new): The online merchant affinity points method of claim 76, further comprising:

establishing an account for the user, the account for maintaining a point balance of the points obtained by the user;

categorizing the points obtained by the user into a plurality of categories;

establishing point valuation rules for points in each of the plurality of categories; and

providing an account value based on the point valuation rules and amount of points categorized into respective categories.

Claim 79 (new): The online merchant affinity points method of claim 76, wherein value includes donation of points to a charity, wherein the donation of points is convertible into a cash value for donation to the charity by the online venue.

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